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THE GULL



GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOL. 90

NO. 8

OCTOBER 2005

FOUNDED 1917

MLK Wetland Restoration a Success for Birds and People

On a Saturday morning in the fall of 1999, some two dozen birders showed up at Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park on San Leandro Bay ready to participate in a new Golden Gate Audubon project. Over the next six years, these and other dedicated volunteers came twice a month to record their observations of the park's two sites—Arrowhead Marsh and a new 72-acre wetland.

A recent report analyzes the first five years of data. For the counters who followed the restored wetlands month after month, year after year, the findings are not surprising. The various habitats provide valuable foraging and roosting areas for hundreds, often thousands, of waterbirds in winter and during migration, from shorebirds, including Least and Western Sandpipers, Dunlins, Willets, Marbled Godwits, American Avocets, and Black-bellied Plovers, to such waterfowl as American Wigeons, Northern Shovelers, and Northern Pintails.

These species and others have long depended on the San Francisco Bay's salt marshes. But since less than 20 percent of the bay's historic wetlands remain today, protecting existing wetlands and reclaiming suitable wetland habitat are of great urgency. As report compiler Kriss Neuman notes, San Leandro Bay is a site of "regional importance" for shorebirds, and the restored wetlands at MLK park have "substantially augmented" the available habitat. Comparing the density of shorebirds using the restored wetlands with that in other sites, Neuman found that it was "greater than that reported for the coastal wetlands in the vicinity of Point Reyes."



Children from East Oakland at Arrowhead Marsh.

Diana Barba Velez

Considered one of the Central Bay's most successful wetland restorations to date, the project was the result of an ambitious effort by Golden Gate Audubon and other environmental groups to stop the Port of Oakland from destroying several hundred acres of seasonal wetlands in the mid-1980s. Ten years of litigation resulted in a

MLK WETLAND RESTORATION, continued on page 11

Third Annual Quail Restore-A-Thon

Join us for the annual Quail Restore-A-Thon on Saturday, November 12, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For the third consecutive year, Golden Gate Audubon's teams of volunteers will restore California Quail habitat in two San Francisco locations: Harding Park Golf Course adjacent to Lake Merced and the Presidio in the northern part of the city. You can also help us raise funds to restore quail habitat by enlisting friends and family members to sponsor your efforts. Or, if you are unable to help in the field, you can sponsor three hours of work by a Golden Gate Audubon volunteer.

For the Restore-A-Thon, we will remove weeds and plant hundreds of quail-friendly seeds and plants in both locations. Doing this takes time, effort, and money. Golden Gate Audubon relies on volunteers who provide their time and hard work, but we also need help raising funds. If you sponsor yourself or another volunteer, or the Golden Gate Audubon volunteer team, at \$10 per hour, the Save the Quail campaign will earn \$40. At \$15 per hour, you will be donating \$60 to the campaign. All contributions are fully tax-deductible. (A form for participating is provided on page 11.)

California Quail, California's state bird and San Francisco's city bird, is a species on the verge of extinction in the city due to loss of habitat in local parks and the Presidio. Quail once numbered well over a thousand in the city, but the population has declined to a total of only

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the fourth Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

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Long-Term Commitments Generate Conservation Victories

It is always exciting to win a big conservation victory. Designating a new wilderness area, preserving pristine acreage for wildlife, and halting a damaging development project are really tangible successes—we can feel our progress and see how our efforts benefit the wildlife and wild places we work so hard to protect.

But most conservation victories don't come easily—and they certainly don't come fast. In this issue of *The Gull*, we highlight a variety of long-term projects that Golden Gate Audubon has been working to advance: the wetland restoration at Oakland's Martin Luther King, Jr. Shoreline, the Save the Quail program in San Francisco, habitat protection and restoration in the Presidio, and the campaign to create the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge. Each project has been a long-time priority, and each has required dedication, commitment, and patience. We also feature two Supporting Members—Matt Zlatunich and Eleanor Briccetti—whose contributions have helped to make these types of programs successful.

The restored wetland at the MLK shoreline is considered one of the most successful wetland restoration projects in San Francisco Bay. But achieving this conservation victory required a decade of litigation and more than five years of restoration and monitoring—and hours of work by Golden Gate Audubon staff and volunteers. The proposed Alameda National Wildlife Refuge has emerged as one of the most important nesting sites for the endangered California Least Tern throughout its range. While we are still working actively to support the land transfer from the U.S. Navy to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the careful management of this vital habitat and the national attention on the future of the proposed refuge are due in large part to the dedication of Golden Gate Audubon volunteers.

Our willingness to commit ongoing resources to important projects continues today. The year-long census of birds at Eastshore State Park that we begin this month aims to advance our long-term efforts to create the park—and to ensure that conservation plans for the park come to fruition. We will also further our efforts at the MLK shoreline by analyzing the success of the restored wetland and of waterbird use of the site. And we continue our Eco-Oakland education program, now in its sixth year, which connects thousands of East Oakland residents with the restored shoreline.

Commitment is integral to Golden Gate Audubon's work. Our contribution to Bay Area conservation successes is marked by our willingness to take on long-term projects and stick with them until our conservation vision is achieved. The commitment of members and volunteers—whether counting birds or restoring habitat—is central to our success as well.

You will enjoy reading about some of our conservation initiatives this month and about some of the people who have helped to make them successful. These stories remind us that conservation takes time. They also renew our commitment to the challenges that lie ahead.

by Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

Grant Extends MLK Restoration Work

Thanks to generous funding from the San Francisco Foundation's "Bay Fund," Golden Gate Audubon will continue its monitoring efforts at the MLK shoreline over the next year. Funding will support an analysis of the restored wetland's success, with an emphasis on changes to the wetland over the past three years. Monitoring of the wetland's topography and vegetation stopped two years ago. But in this time, some significant changes have occurred, such as the appearance of invasive spartina, or cordgrass, at the site. Our extended project will assess the extent of the spartina and other challenges.

Supporting Members Aid Success of GGA Programs

Supporting Members play a critical role in our mission—from providing membership dues that support our programs to volunteering for projects that help us achieve our goals. This month, we feature two Supporting Members whose volunteer contributions are making a critical difference to Golden Gate Audubon's work.

Eleanor Briccetti

Eleanor Briccetti believes she has the “perfect life” that combines her passion for birds, photography, and music. As an award-winning wildlife photographer, she travels the Bay Area and throughout California, the United States, and the world to capture on film the magnificence of birds and other wildlife in their native habitats. She has photographed Marine Iguanas in the Galápagos, Polar Bears in



Eleanor Briccetti.

Churchill, Manitoba, and Lilac-breasted Rollers in Africa, along with dozens of bird species in the Bay Area.

Since she moved to the East Bay 11 years ago and joined Golden Gate Audubon, Eleanor has volunteered extensively with Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. She has taken hundreds of photos of California Least Terns, Golden Eagles, Western

Gulls, and other birds at the refuge. She says it was her move to the Bay Area that inspired her to become serious about photography.

“I had been interested in photography since childhood,” she says, “primarily because of my father, who was an avid amateur photographer, but I didn’t get serious about it until I discovered all the wonderful parks and open spaces in the Bay Area and the opportunities to see and photograph wildlife.” Eleanor began going on birding trips with Point Reyes Bird Observatory ornithologist Rich Stallcup and with renowned bird photographer Arthur Morris, who taught her photo techniques and an essential requirement for watching and photographing birds—namely, patience.

“It takes limitless patience,” she says. “Birds are difficult because they don’t stay still. It’s also very important to know your subject, specifically bird behavior. You have to know that when a bird is taking a bath, for example, at some point it may do a wing stretch, and you need to be ready for that very fleeting moment.”

In addition to being featured on GGA’s website and in *The Gull*, Eleanor’s photos have appeared in numerous publications, including *Birder’s World* and *Bay Nature*, and have been displayed at the Albany Arts Gallery, Sea Ranch and the Gualala Arts Center on the California coast, Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and the Hayward Shoreline Interpretive Center.

But what about her love of music? Before moving to the Bay Area from Indianapolis to be near her children and grandchildren,

BRICCETTI, continued on page 4

Matt Zlatunich

“I saw a pair of Western Bluebirds sitting on a light post along Battery Caulfield Road,” the San Francisco fireman said, “which was unusual because maybe only one or two of them had been seen anywhere in the city in decades. I immediately notified other birders, and within weeks we saw the birds in the same spot and observed them foraging on insects attracted to areas restored by volunteers. Then they nested, and hatched and fledged two chicks.”

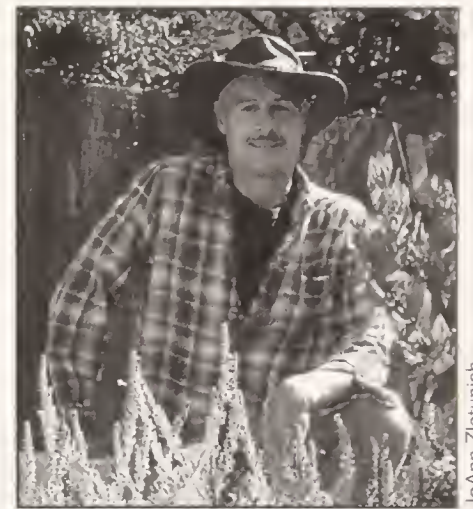
Finding the nest occurred in the spring, in time to be announced just before World Environment Day, whose major theme was the importance of urban habitats for birds and other wildlife.

His name is Matthew Zlatunich, or Matt to his colleagues on the San Francisco Conservation Committee of Golden Gate Audubon. His fascination with birds started when he was growing up in San Francisco. Later, in 1999, he was taking a class on botany at the Academy of Sciences, and the instructor told him about Golden Gate Audubon’s field trips at Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park. On those trips, Matt and his wife, JoAnn, often joined famed local birder Harry Fuller. “To have him right beside me, hear a call, and say ‘Ah! That’s a Bewick’s Wren!’ or ‘That’s a Ruby-crowned Kinglet!’ was so wonderful that it increased my interest in birds a hundred times over. It made me want to learn more!”

Over the next few years, Matt went on other Golden Gate Audubon field trips, some of them led by Dan Murphy and Alan Hopkins, and did lots of birding on his own. In 2003, Dan Murphy and Bob Bennett, chair of the San Francisco Conservation Committee, asked him to join the committee. “I jumped at the chance,” Matt said.

Matt has represented the committee, along with Alan Hopkins, in the Presidio. He has monitored the slowly growing California Quail population in habitats restored by dedicated volunteers. He has attended countless public meetings concerning the future of the park, especially the renovation of the old Public Health Service Hospital close to prime quail habitat.

Matt has tried all along to build relationships with representatives of the many Presidio partners (Golden Gate Audubon is among them): the National Park Service, Presidio Trust, Presidio Park Stewards, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, and



Matt Zlatunich.

JoAnn Zlatunich

ZLATUNICH, continued on page 4

Join Golden Gate Audubon at Upcoming Nature Festivals

You can help us spread the word about Golden Gate Audubon at two exciting events that will be held the weekend of October 8–9. We need volunteers to help staff an information booth at OceanFest in San Francisco and at the Wildlife Conservation Expo in Los Altos Hills. In addition to telling people about our programs and activities, you'll have plenty of time to enjoy these events focusing on the celebration and conservation of wildlife.

OceanFest, on October 8, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Headquarters, Crissy Field, San Francisco, will feature displays on marine life and conservation, water recreation, and sustainable seafood and agriculture. The festival focuses on the riches of the Gulf of the Farallones and the sanctuaries at Cordell Bank and Monterey

to the north and south, and on how everyone can take action to protect the oceans. Many local organizations, in addition to Golden Gate Audubon, will have booths at the event. There will also be an organic farmers' market and activities for children.

The Wildlife Conservation Expo will be held October 8 and 9, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day, at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills. Golden Gate Audubon will have a booth on October 9 only. The Wildlife Conservation Network, sponsor of the expo, supports innovative conservationists in developing countries who are working to sustain endangered wildlife and habitats. Speakers and exhibits offer an excellent opportunity to learn about the excitement and challenges of saving wildlife around the world, including cheetahs in Botswana and Namibia, wolves in Ethiopia, African

wild dogs in Zimbabwe, and even owls here in the United States. On October 8, Dr. Jane Goodall will be the keynote speaker. Speakers on October 9 include representatives from the Snow Leopard Conservancy and the Cheetah Conservation Fund. A \$30 entrance fee is charged each day. If you help us at our booth, your entrance fee may be waived!

You do not have to be a birding expert to share information with people who come to our booth. We provide all the material you need. Even if you can help us for part of either day, these events offer an opportunity to meet others who are concerned about protecting the environment and to learn more about how you can help conserve wildlife. If you would like to help, call 510.843.2222 or email tzuardo@goldengateaudubon.org.

by Tara Zuardo, Office Manager

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

Least Tern (\$200 to \$499)

Barbara Anderson

Clapper Rail (\$100 to \$199)

Mr. & Mrs. Terry Coddington, Phil & Bo De Long Cotty, Dwight L. Johnson, John V. Sudall, Linda & Randy Swanson (*Northern California Bird Box*)

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Rosemary Bower, Barbara A. Christman, Timothy J. Cleere, Glenda Cook, Pauline Fong, Steven Hiatt, Michael Korson, Ronald Morrison, Carol Pachi, Karen Rosenbaum, Michael Sanchez (*Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign*)

Gift Memberships

Wendy Pelton: *Carole Pelton*

In Memory of

Thelma Patton Wiener: *Betty Ann Webster*

Grants

The San Francisco Foundation: *Martin Luther King Jr. Shoreline Restoration Monitoring Program*

BRICCETTI, continued from page 3

Eleanor was a professional violinist. She was a member of the orchestras of Indianapolis, Kansas City, and St. Louis, as well as an active chamber music performer. She also conducted a program for young violinists and cellists and gave private violin lessons. Her study of the violin began at age nine. She later attended Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, where she earned two bachelor's degrees in music, then received a master's degree in violin from Indiana University. Currently, she teaches private violin lessons to 15 students in the Bay Area.

Eleanor continues to turn her time and photographic talents to the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. Her photos are being shared with decision-makers and refuge supporters, in the hope that the images will underscore the importance of establishing the refuge. Golden Gate Audubon members will have a chance to meet Eleanor Briccetti and hear about her adventures on Thursday, October 20, in Berkeley (see Speaker Series, page 5).

by Marjorie Blackwell

ZLATUNICH, continued from page 3

other local groups. He has seen how collaborating with professionals and volunteers from various organizations can get projects accomplished.

"I'm no biologist," says this recognized birder. "I'm a regular guy. It's just that when I go out there, I look around very carefully. The more you observe, the more you see. So what you thought was just a bunch of trees and bushes with some birds is really a whole world of distinctive and interesting lives." What advice does Matt have for all of us regular birders? He looked at his wife and said, "JoAnn and I urge people to get involved in their local parks. Help your neighbors, whether they wear clothes, feathers, or leaves." Matt and JoAnn live these words. They reside in the Richmond District of San Francisco and volunteer at nearby Golden Gate Park as well as the Presidio. On Saturday, November 12, you can meet them at the Presidio, where they will be participating, along with other volunteers, in Golden Gate Audubon's Quail Restore-A-Thon.

by Dan Richman, San Francisco Conservation Committee

SPEAKER SERIES



Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m. At 7 p.m., healthful, delicious snacks are served by hospitality coordinator, Susanne Shields. If you would like to suggest food and drinks for meetings or would like to help, call Susanne at 415.810.4900, or email susannekshields@yahoo.com. For information about upcoming events, detailed directions, or updates, see www.goldengateaudubon.org.

The Secret Life of the Endangered Marbled Murrelet

Zach Peery

San Francisco

Friday, October 14

Sharing his years of research, Zach Peery will discuss the behavior, habitat, and population status of the Marbled Murrelet, a seabird listed as endangered by the state of California and threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Peery has been studying the murrelets that nest in the coastal redwood forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains. With a team of field biologists, Peery travels by Zodiac to survey the murrelets from Half Moon Bay to Santa Cruz. The isolated nature of the population, which numbers only about 500, has led to a theory that this population may be distinct genetically from others. If this is the case, the murrelets in this region need to be conserved in order to protect the species' genetic diversity.

Zach Peery received a PhD in Environmental Science, Policy, and Management from UC Berkeley. He currently has a joint post-doctoral research position at UC Berkeley and the Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, where he is continuing his studies of Marbled Murrelets and other seabirds.

County Fair Building, Strybing Arboreum, Golden Gate Park, Ninth Avenue at Lincoln Way
Directions: www.strybing.org/visiting/page2/html

Adventures of a Wildlife Photographer: From Kenya to the Alameda Wildlife Refuge

Eleanor Briccetti

Berkeley

Thursday, October 20

Award-winning wildlife photographer Eleanor Briccetti (see article, page 4) will share her experiences of photographing birds and other wildlife in Texas, Africa, the Galápagos Islands, and other parts of the world, as well as in the Alameda Wildlife Refuge.

Her presentation will feature one-of-a-kind photographs of birds and other wildlife unique to those areas, including the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, and Green Jay in Texas, the Crowned Crane, Little Bee-eater, and Superb Starling in Kenya, and endemic species in the Galápagos Islands, including the Swallow-tailed Gull, Lava Heron, Galápagos Hawk, Galápagos (or Giant) Tortoise, and Marine and Land Iguanas. Briccetti, a Golden Gate Audubon volunteer, will also give an overview of her many visits to the Alameda Wildlife Refuge and the Least Tern colony.

Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin)
Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.html



Least Tern and chick.

Eleanor Briccetti

2005 Christmas Bird Count— Mark Your Calendars!

Every year in December, Bay Area birders volunteer to count birds, contributing to a national database that tracks the population of wintering species. Golden Gate Audubon sponsors two Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). The Oakland CBC will be held on Sunday, December 18, the San Francisco CBC on Thursday, December 29. Look for details in the November Gull.

If you are unfamiliar with the count, and want to learn more go to Birding & Wildlife Resources on our website, www.goldengateaudubon.org.

Wanted: Energetic Volunteer to Help Plan Programs

Golden Gate Audubon is seeking a volunteer to help organize our Speaker Series. The programs feature speakers who give slide-illustrated talks on a wide variety of topics, from birding adventures in exotic parts of the globe to Bay Area birds and conservation issues.

The position entails contacting potential speakers, scheduling appearances, introducing programs, and ensuring that arrangements are set up properly. The East Bay programs are held at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month in Berkeley, the San Francisco programs at 7 p.m. on the second Friday (except June, July, August, and December).

If you are interested in this rewarding assignment, contact Tara Zuardo, Office Manager, at 510.843.2222, or send an email to volunteer@goldengateaudubon.org. San Francisco residents are encouraged to apply.

FIELD TRIPS

Susan Groves



Hawk Hill

Marin County

Saturday, October 1

Leader: Stefanie Arthur, 415.587.9282

Meet at 10 a.m. at platform with the wing-span diagrams to enjoy the various species of hawks that migrate through the Bay Area with GG Raptor Observatory day leader. Trip will end around 2 p.m. Bring lunch, liquids, sunscreen, and hat. Layered clothing advisable. Parking is limited; carpool if possible.

From SF, cross GG Bridge and take second exit Alexander Ave. Get in left lane, following signs "101 San Francisco." Turn left at stop sign, cross under freeway, turn right onto Conzelman Rd., and drive 1.8 mi. to Hawk Hill. Park and walk up hill.



Birding for Everyone

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum

Saturdays, October 1, November 5

Leaders: Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, San Francisco Nature Education; Darin Dawson, San Francisco Botanical Garden Docent, 415.387.9160, www.sfnature.org

Meet at 10 a.m. for this monthly trip at kiosk/bookstore at front gate of Botanical Garden, Ninth Ave. at Lincoln Way. Trip ends at noon. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Lake Merced Bird Walk

San Francisco

Saturday, October 1

Leader: David Armstrong, 415.305.7681 (cell), darmstrong99@yahoo.com

Meet at 8 a.m. at concrete bridge on South Lake Merced. We will bird various locations on and around Lake Merced, covering up to 5 miles of flat terrain. Bring water. The concrete bridge is accessed on John Muir Dr. about 1/4 mile northwest of intersection of John Muir Dr. and Lake Merced Blvd. Heavy rain cancels. Trip ends around noon.

Point Reyes

Marin County

Sunday, October 2

Leader: Hugh Cotter

415.931.7736, htcotter@sbcglobal.net

Meet at 8 a.m. at Drakes Monument, Drakes Beach (off Sir Francis Drake Blvd.). We will search for fall vagrants. Bring lunch. Trip ends midafternoon.

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum

San Francisco

Sundays, October 2, November 6

Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

For this regular monthly half-day trip, meet at 8 a.m. at front gate of Botanical Garden, Ninth Ave. and Lincoln Way. This delightful section of Golden Gate Park has several micro-habitats that attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. All levels of birders welcome.

Arrowhead Marsh Bilingual Family Trip

Oakland

Friday, October 7

Leader: Rene Urriola, 510.938.8016, rene25@gmail.com

Meet at 3:30 p.m. in front of the lookout structure at Arrowhead Marsh. We'll restore critical salt marsh habitat for shorebirds and endangered Clapper Rail. We'll also check out the birds, so bring binoculars or use ours. The trip will be conducted bilingually, in Spanish and English. All ages are welcome. Trip ends at 5:30 p.m. Students can earn community service hours for these trips.

Take I-880 to Hegenberger exit, go west on Hegenberger to Doolittle Dr. Turn right on Doolittle, right onto Swan Way and left into MLK, Jr. Regional Shoreline Park. Drive to end for Arrowhead Marsh parking lot.

San Mateo Coast

Saturday, October 8

Leader: Bruce Mast, 510.271.4785, 510.435.1371(cell), Bmast@alumni.rice.edu

Meet at 9 a.m. in front of Año Nuevo State Reserve Visitor Center. We will look for fall migrants on land and sea; elephant seals are a possibility. The trip will cover 4 to 5 miles of mostly flat, easy walking in a variety of habitats: riparian, coastal scrub, sandy beach, rocky coast. Bring lunch.

Take Hwy. 92 from San Mateo west to Half Moon Bay. Turn south (left) on Hwy. 1 and travel about 27 miles. The park entrance is 12 miles south of Pescadero Rd., 3 miles south of Rossi Rd., and just north of the San Mateo/Santa Cruz County border. Turn right (west) into the reserve, pay at entrance station, and park in lot.

[\$]

Pelagic Trip: Monterey Bay

Saturday, October 8

Leader: Alan Hopkins

415.664.0983, ash@sfo.com

Trip departs from Monterey Harbor at Fisherman's Wharf at 7 a.m. to view seabirds in Monterey Bay. For details go to www.shearwaterjourneys.com, see Summer Gull or call trip leader.

Wednesday at Arrowhead Marsh

Alameda County

Wednesday, October 12

Leader: Courtenay Peddle

510.532.8911 (no calls before 9 a.m.), capeddle@there.net

Meet at Arrowhead Marsh parking lot at 9:30 a.m. to study and enjoy wintering birds. Up to 14 species of ducks, and always the possibility of seeing Clapper Rails. Bring scope if you have one. All levels of birders welcome. See October 7 trip for directions.

Eastshore State Park

Richmond-El Cerrito

Friday, October 14

Leader: Bob Lewis

510.845.5001, rlewis0727@aol.com

Meet at 10 a.m. at Rydin Road Parking Lot of Point Isabel. We will walk north along the Bay Trail to Meeker Slough and back, looking for birds to add to the new park's

birdlist. The total of 2.5 miles will be on mostly paved level ground. We may do a small loop at Point Isabel at the end of the trip to complete the survey. We will mostly be looking at shorebirds.

Go toward Costco on Central Ave., turn right (north) on Rydin Rd. which is just west of Hwy. 580, and proceed to end.

Nineteenth Annual Pt. Reyes National Seashore All-Day Birding Blitz

Marin County

Saturday, October 15

Leaders: Leon Abrams, 510.843.4107, leonabrams@earthlink.net; Cathy Purchis catpur@value.net

Meet at 8 a.m. at Five Brooks Trailhead parking lot, 3.5 miles south of Olema on Hwy. 1. This fast-paced multihabitat trip covers Five Brooks Pond area, Limantour Spit, Drakes Beach, Chimney Rock, and Point Reyes, ending at Bear Valley, producing approximately 100 species. Bring food, water, and layered clothing. A joint activity cosponsored with Ohlone Audubon Society and National Park Service. Five Brooks Trail Head is 3.5 miles south of Olema on Hwy. 1.

Hawk Hill

Marin County

Sunday, October 16

Leader: Bob Power
510.482.9601, rcpower@sbcglobal.net

Meet at 10 a.m. at the West Coast's finest raptor migration location. In addition to identifying raptors, participants can enjoy the Golden Gate Raptor Observatory's "Hawk Talk" at noon and a banding demonstration at 1 p.m. Then we'll drive/walk to Pt. Bonita lighthouse. Trip ends at 4 p.m. See October 1 trip for directions.

Bicycle Trip: San Leandro to Hayward on the SF Bay Trail

Alameda County

Saturday, October 22

Leader: Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233
(call for cell number; no calls after 9 p.m.), kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 8 a.m. at San Leandro BART or 8:30 a.m. at San Leandro Marina Park,

last parking lot. Expect to see birds on the bay, in the marsh, in the fields, and aloft. We will bicycle along the Bay Trail to Hayward Regional Shoreline, making a 14-mile round-trip excursion (20 miles if using BART). First portion of trail is paved, and remaining part is easily negotiable. Bicycle helmet required. Dress in layers. Bring lunch and liquids.

By car: From I-880 in San Leandro, take Marina Blvd. exit (west). In 1.4 mi turn left onto Monarch Bay Dr. Go to last parking lot at San Leandro Marina Park. We will meet near restroom. By BART: Ride 3 miles to San Leandro Marina Park using bicycle lane on Williams St., just south of station. Allow time to process ticket and get bicycle to the platform.



Hayward Regional Shoreline

Alameda County

Sunday, October 23

Leaders: Pamela Llewellyn, 925.413-8329, seacreature219@sbcglobal.net; Michael Butler, 510.684-3375, mjbkl@earthlink.net

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Winton Road access to Hayward Regional Shoreline for a half-day walk over mostly level ground. We will bird around Frank's Dump and Mount Trashmore and should see a nice mix of birds including a number of raptors, shorebirds, and passerines. Beginners welcome. Bring a scope if you have one.

Aquatic Park

San Francisco

Sunday, October 23

Leader: SF Maritime National Historical Park Ranger Carol Kiser, 415.561.7100 or 561.7104

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at foot of Hyde Street Pier (Hyde and Jefferson) for this 2-hour beginners' walk to discover birds in the urban environment. Dress in layers. Trip is wheelchair accessible.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park Oakland

Wednesday, October 26

Leaders: Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066; Ruth Tobey, 510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net; Travis Hails

Meet at 9:30 a.m. on lake side of the nature center at Perkins and Bellevue Sts. We'll look around, then go down lake toward Embarcadero or up path across street from Nature Center to Children's Fairyland. Trip ends at noon.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins and walk into the park on Perkins, or park in the free lot at the boathouse, 568 Bellevue. From parking lot, walk past children's art center to far side of bird yard with freshwater ponds.

Lake Merritt

Oakland

Saturday, October 29

Leader: Travis Hails, 510.451.1207 (no calls after 9 p.m.), travishails@yahoo.com

Meet at 8 a.m. for at the large spherical cage near the Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue Sts. Learn the ducks and other waterfowl of Lake Merritt. Beginners welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them. See above trip for directions.

Eastshore State Park

Albany

Sunday, October 30

Leader: Rusty Scalf
510.666.9936, rscalf@jps.net

Meet at 10 a.m. at west end of Buchanan, next to racetrack. We will bird the Albany Bulb and adjacent areas looking for birds to add to the new park's birdlist, including shorebirds, ducks, and other waterbirds.

Go west on Marin Ave and cross San Pablo, where Marin becomes Buchanan. Continue under the freeway toward the racetrack. Park in the parking area at end of road.



Contact Susan Groves, Field Trips Coordinator, at 510.654.5954 or grovesusan@gmail.com:

- if you can share a ride or if you need a ride,
- if you have difficulty reaching a leader and need information,
- if you have suggestions for trips, or
- if you are interested in leading a trip.

key



Carpool



Entrance fee required



Biking trip

OBSERVATIONS

July 27 – August 31, 2005

Bruce Mast



August marked the end of the summer doldrums and the beginning of fall follies. Shorebirds and pelagics continued their southerly movement, and migrant songbirds began moving through as well.

Loons to Ducks

Fall pelagic birding picked up steam with trips to the Cordell Bank (MRN/SON) on July 30, Aug. 16, and the 21st, and to the Farallon Islands (SF) on Aug. 7 and 20. Highlights included 50 and 35 Black-footed Albatrosses on the Cordell Bank trips (RS, DeS; oob); a few Northern Fulmars; a **Dark-rumped Petrel** (*Pterodroma phaeopygia/sandwichensis*) on the Aug. 21 Cordell Bank trip (RS; oob); a couple Flesh-footed Shearwaters at Cordell Bank (RS, DeS; oob); 10 Wilson's, 2 Fork-tailed, and 3,000 Ashy Storm-Petrels on July 30 at Cordell Bank (RS; oob). Most trips recorded good numbers of Pink-footed, Buller's, and Sooty Shearwaters and the same 3 species were well represented on an Aug. 13 seawatch from Pescadero Beach, SM (RT).

A Little Blue Heron reported from Crissy Lagoon, SF, in July was later determined to be a juvenile Snowy Egret. A White-faced Ibis made 2 appearances at New Chicago Marsh, SCL, Aug. 6 and 31 (AEi; MRo) and another visited Shollenberger Park in Petaluma, SON, on the 14th (DM). The Harlequin Duck duo continued at Coyote Pt. Marina, SM (RT). An Aug. 20 seawatch from Pigeon Point, SM, tallied 2 Black Scoters (RT). A male Long-tailed Duck remained at Double Rock, SF, at least through the 13th, when it was described as "positively miserable looking" (KMK).

Raptors to Alcids

On July 28, an observer with access to an undisclosed location near Laguna de Santa

Rosa, SON, confirmed that the Common Black-Hawk remained in the area (DJ). Concentrations of Swainson's Hawks remained north of Livermore, ALA, where herons and egrets helped them keep the local rodent population in check (mob). Elsewhere, solo Swainsons were described Aug. 30 over downtown Pescadero, SM (AJ), and the next day over the Road Fork quarry at PRNS, MRN (RS). The season's first Ferruginous Hawk, this one a juvie, crossed the Golden Gate from the MRN Headlands on the 30th and appeared to make landfall near Ft. Mason, SF (SBa; oob). The itinerant **Crested Caracara** (*Caracara plancus*) reappeared and was photographed on Aug. 2–3 near Stinson and Rodeo Beaches, MRN (KH, JMe; CB, AF). It then continued south to MTY, where it spent the month. An Aug. 21 trip to Round Valley RP, CC, brought



Arctic Tern.

relief from the SF fog and nice views of a dispersing Prairie Falcon (MB).

Shorebirds continued their return to the Bay Area this month. A single Solitary Sandpiper was observed airborne along Tunitas Cr., SM, on the 6th (RT, KO). Numerous Red Knots remained at Frank's Dump, Hayward RS (ALA), through the 7th (BP; LaL, SJ), and a flock spent the month at the mouth of Stevens Cr., SCL (FV, BR;

mob). Scattered Semipalmated Sandpiper sightings were reported in early Aug. from Stevens Cr. (MRo); Pescadero Marsh (RT); Schollenberger Park, Petaluma (KW); and New Chicago Marsh (SCL) (SRo; FV, BR). Two were also reported Aug. 20–23 at the Huichica Cr. Unit of NAP-SON Marshes Wildlife Area (NAP) (LeL; JR). Beginning Aug. 13, Baird's Sandpipers were widely reported at mudflats in MRN, SCL, SF, SM, and SON. On Aug. 31, a Pectoral Sandpiper joined a Baird's and other peeps at Doran Park, Bodega Bay, SON (LaL). The NAP-SON Marshes Wildlife Area hosted a Stilt Sandpiper on Aug. 27 (LK), and both a Stilt Sandpiper and female Ruff arrived at New Chicago Marsh in Alviso on Aug. 30–31 (MM; mob).

A high count of 750 Wilson's Phalaropes occupied the CCFS waterbird pond, SCL, through the 12th (MM, RJ, MRo). Red-necked Phalaropes were common, with the peak tally of 1,250 at New Chicago Marsh on the 14th (SRo). In contrast, the only Red Phalaropes were 3 birds observed on the Cordell Bank pelagic trip on July 30 (RS; oob). The pelagic trips also reported handfuls of South Polar Skuas, Parasitic, and Long-tailed Jaegers (JCS, RS, DeS; oob). Parasitic Jaegers were regular along the coast, where they took up their annual tradition of harassing the Elegant Terns.

Beginning Aug. 19, a juvenile Franklin's Gull joined the Ring-billed Gulls at Sunnyvale WPCP (MRo; mob). Up to 25 Sabine's Gulls were found over Cordell Bank on July 30 and 2 more were there on the 16th (RS, DeS; oob). A Common Tern was reported on the 18th from Abbott's Lagoon, PRNS, MRN (DF), and up to 3 more lingered Aug. 26–30 at Elsie Rohmer Shoreline Park, ALA (MRa). The mid-month Cordell Bank boat noted 4 Arctic Terns winging toward Antarctica. Back in the south bay, a Black Tern touched down at Crittenden Marsh, SCL, on the 18th and spent a couple days foraging over the adjacent salt ponds (BB; FV, BR, AEi). Two Xantus's Murrelets

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



Red-necked Phalarope.

(*scrippsi* race) were the most remarkable alcids on the Aug. 21 Cordell Bank, trip (RS; oob). Tufted Puffins were the highlights of the Farallon Islands trips with 12–14 tallied on the 20th (HC; oob).

Doves to Thrashers

A wandering White-winged Dove made landfall on SE Farallon Island, SF, on the 26th (AB; oob). Through Aug. 15, up to 17 Black Swifts were seen foraging over the sand dunes and sea cliffs of Año Nuevo SR, SM (JMo; PM). This year a pair returned to nest there for the first time in several years. Elsewhere, 2 Black Swifts passed over Hawk Hill, MRN, on the 30th (SBa; oob). A feeder in Morgan Hill, SCL, attracted an immature male and two female-type Black-chinned Hummingbirds Aug. 23 and 24. The same feeder lured a female Costa's Hummingbird Aug. 6–14 (SRo).

A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** (*Empidonax flaviventris*) at SE Farallon Island on the 26th was just the 8th record for that site (AB; oob). Migrating Willow and Least Flycatchers were recorded there the same day. On the 30th, the season's first Hammond's Flycatcher made a stop-over at Mt. Davidson, SF (BF). The same day, an Eastern Phoebe as found at the Giacomini Wetland Restoration Project, MRN, where it preferred the low levee that separates the Tomales Bay tidal marsh from the diked wetlands (SH, DoS).

A Kingbird at Año Nuevo SR was ID'd as Cassin's on the 6th (BR; oob). An Eastern Kingbird arrived at North L. in GGP, SF, on the 27th (AH; JR, DA). The Aug. 26

report from SE Farallon Island included a Red-eyed Vireo (AB; oob). Purple Martins were observed at several coastal locales in SON, MRN, and SM, with a high count of 12 individuals over Barnabe Peak in Samuel P. Taylor SP, MRN, on the 7th (DB). A couple juvie Bank Swallows, perhaps dispersing from the Ft. Funston colony, hung out at Moffett Field, SCL, and surrounding marshes on the 31st (MRo). A few Banks were also noted coastside at Año Nuevo SR on the 6th (BR; oob).

The Western Bluebird pair at Lobos Dunes, Presidio, SF, succeeded in their second nest attempt, as evidenced by a chubby spotted fledging being fed on July 30 (SA). Three juvenile Varied Thrushes were found July 28 along the Portola Trail in Pescadero Cr. CP, SM (DSu).

This month's sole Thrasher was a Sage, recorded around the 26th at SE Farallon Island (AB; oob).

Wood Warblers to Finches

Migration of the confusing fall warblers

got under way at several coastal hotspots this month (see Tables). The season's first Summer Tanager turned up at Nunes (A) Ranch, PRNS, on the 31st, where it was accompanied by a Blue Grosbeak (RS). The Aug. 26 report from SE Farallon Island included 4 sparrow species: Brewer's, Lark, Black-throated, and Song (AB; oob). Adult male Indigo Buntings were noted on the 15th at Monte Bello OSP, SCL (GH) and on the 20th at a seed feeder in Corte Madera., MRN (NW).

At least 12 Tri-colored Blackbirds were recorded at L. Merced, SF, on the 9th (SRu), and a few more joined the blackbird flocks at New Chicago Marsh on the 31st (MRo). On the 7th, a Yellow-headed Blackbird was ID'd at 65 mph from Hwy 101 along the Brisbane Lagoon, SM, where it raised hopes among SF county listers of a new year bird (FT). Those hopes remain unfulfilled. We end this month's report back at SE Farallon Island, where a Hooded Oriole was among vagrant songbirds making the water crossing (AB; oob).

Wood Warbler Sightings

Tennessee Warbler

8/26	SE Farallon Islands, SF	AB; oob
8/30	Upper Cole Valley, SF	PS

Blackburnian Warbler

7/31	Russian Gulch, SON	DoS
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Prairie Warbler

8/26	SE Farallon Islands, SF	AB; oob
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Black-and-white Warbler

8/27-29	S. L. Merced, SF	MB; AH, DA
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American Redstart

8/26	SE Farallon Islands, SF	AB; oob
8/21	Pilarcitos Cr., Half Moon Bay, SM	RT
8/28	Bodega Head, SON	SBI

Northern Waterthrush

8/26	Charleston, SCL	HH
8/26	SE Farallon Islands, SF	AB; oob
8/25	Butano Cr., SM	RT

Yellow-breasted Chat

8/28-29	East Wash, Lincoln Park, SF	AH; MB
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Abbreviations for Observers: AB, Adam Brown; AEd, Art Edwards; AEI, Al Eisner; AF, Allen Fish; AH, Alan Hopkins; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo; BB, Bill Bousman; BD, Bill Don; BF, Brian Fitch; BP, Bob Power; BR, Bob Reiling; BT, Barbara Taylor; CB, Cathy Bell; CC, Chris Carpenter; CP, Clark Peterson; DA, David Armstrong; DB, Dennis Braddy; DeS, Debbie Shearwater; DF, Dea Freid; DJ, Don Jackson; DL, Don Lewis; DM, Dan Murphy; DoS, Doug Shaw; DSu, David Suddjian; FT, Francis Toldi; FV, Frank Vanslager; GH, Garth Harwood; HC, Hugh Cotter; HH, Howard Hickey; JCS, Juan Carlos Solis; JMe, Joe Medley; JMo, Joseph Morlan; JMu, Joan Murphy; JR, Jean Richmond; KG, Kevin Guse; KH, Keith Hansen; KMK, Kevin McKereghan; KO, Kris Olson; KW, Ken Wilson; LaL, Laura Look; LB, Len Blumin; LeL, Les Lieurance; LH, Lisa Hug; LK, Larry Kent; LT, Laurence Taylor; MB, Michelle Brodie; ME, Mark Eaton; MM, Michael Mammoser; MRa, Mark Rauzon; MRo, Mike Rogers; NW, Nick Whelan; PB, Phyllis Browning; PD, Peggy Don; PM, Peter Metropulos; PS, Paul Saraceni; RJ, Richard Jeffers; RS, Rich Stallcup; RT, Ron Thom; SA, Stefanie Arthur; SBa, Steve Bauer; SBI, Sara Blauman; SH, Steve Hampton; SJ, Sheila Junge; SRo, Steve Rottenborn; SRu, Siobhan Ruck; TH, Tony Harrow; WL, William Legge

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers, "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listers; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; BBA, Breeding Bird Atlas; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Contra Costa; CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station; Cr., Creek; Cyn., Canyon; DENWR, Don Edwards SF Bay National Wildlife Refuge; EEC, Environmental Education Center; Ft., Fort; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L., Lake; MDSP, Mount Diablo State Park; Mt, Mount; MRN, Marin; N., North; NAP, Napa; NSMWA, Napa-Sonoma Marshes Wildlife Area; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; Pt., Point; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; RP, Regional Park; Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant

BACKYARD BIRDER

Meg Pauletich



If you follow environmental issues, you are undoubtedly aware of the struggle to monitor logging practices on the Pacific Coast. Other than the Spotted Owl and various forest-dwelling mammals, you may have heard of the Marbled Murrelet. Little was known about certain behaviors of this species until fairly recently.

The Marbled Murrelet is a member of the auk family, called Alcidae (alcids). The family's most famous member is the extinct Great Auk. It had short, strong wings well adapted for swimming, but was helpless on land, easy prey for sailors who killed millions for food and for feathers. The last pair was taken near Iceland in June of 1844.

Other than murrelets, members of the auk family include puffins, murres, guillemots, auklets, the Dovekie, and the Razorbill. The birds are small (6 inches) to medium (14 inches) with narrow wings, short to medium length bills, and small heads. Their front three toes are fully webbed. Onshore, all but puffins waddle wobbly on their tarsi. In flight, they resemble flying footballs. With a few exceptions, they are colored black or sooty brown with white. Their legs, mouth linings, and bills are often brightly colored. Elaborate bill modifications and facial plumes are found in some species.

Auks live exclusively in a marine environment except when nesting. Most raise their families in dense colonies without actually building a nest. Many lay their eggs on rocky ledges, in crevices, or under rocks. A few, such as puffins, burrow in the earth and use a sparse lining of vegetation, feathers, and other debris. Most alcids nest near the sea, except for the Kittlitz's Murrelet, which chooses rocky slopes above timberline on mountain tops. Most remarkable of all is the Marbled Murrelet, which prefers to nest in conifers from 20 feet to more than 140 feet above the ground.

The auk family's eggs vary tremendously.

They may be white, yellowish, buff, green, or olive, and unmarked, finely speckled, heavily splotched, and/or scrawled gray, buff, reddish, purplish, brown, or blackish. The markings may be well defined or fuzzy, evenly distributed or concentrated at the large end, or may cover the surface so thoroughly that the egg appears almost wholly dark. Many eggs are elongated to keep them



Marbled Murrelet.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

from rolling off the nest. It's amazing that any eggs hatch given all the perils they face. To make matters worse, most auks, including Marbled Murrelets, lay only one egg. No wonder numbers are dwindling.

A few auk family members are migratory, but generally, after nesting, the birds disperse at sea. They are mostly silent except when nesting. Then they are very gregarious and make some remarkably dissonant (to humans) sounds: barks, moans, whistles, guttural growls, quacks, and croaks. It is believed that the name *auk* refers to one of these sounds.

At the eye of the storm surrounding protection of nesting habitat in conifer forests is the Marbled Murrelet. The first known nest was found in Alaska in June of 1931. Later, a stunned bird with brood patch and fragments of egg, but no nest, was taken from the debris of a large hemlock felled in

British Columbia in 1953. Then, on August 7, 1974, a tree trimmer in Santa Cruz County, California, accidentally shook a chick from its nest 140 feet up in a Douglas fir. The nest was on a large branch near its junction with the tree trunk.

Marbled Murrelet and Kittlitz's Murrelet are distinctive in that in late winter and early spring, before breeding season, they molt their winter garb of dark gray above and spotless white below, exchanging it for a protective coloration of brown or gray-brown barred plumage. This helps conceal the birds from predators while they incubate their eggs. In winter, the Marbled Murrelet can be identified by an incomplete collar and white cheeks and is the only murrelet south of Alaska with distinctive white scapulars (wing patches) shown in flight.

These two species of small murrelets make amazingly long flights from their nests to the sea to feed on small fish, then return to feed their young. In summer these flying footballs can be seen skimming the surface of navigable waterways from Puget Sound to Alaska. Their summer range extends to Central California. Their flight is swift, direct, and strong. They can fly underwater like penguins, at two or three wingbeats per second.

I have seen only one murrelet. It was winter, between fierce storms. I was with other birders at Hayward Regional Shoreline. The sky was dark and foreboding with a few streaks of sunlight. Flocks of shorebirds, ducks, and geese wheeled above us. We rested our necks long enough to spy a small bird swimming close to us in a slough. It had a gray back, black head, white underparts, and small yellow bill. We all agreed it was an Ancient Murrelet, seen occasionally in winter along the Pacific Coast. We called a local expert, who sped out to the shoreline and confirmed our identification. The winds and rain had driven the bird into the bay.

Let's hope that these fascinating auks will persevere and be able to sustain their populations.

To learn more about the Marbled Murrelet, attend the October 14 Speaker Series in Berkeley (see page 5).

MLK WETLAND RESTORATION, *continued from page 1*

settlement that restored 72 acres of tidal and seasonal wetlands, doubling the habitat provided by Arrowhead Marsh.

The restoration area, as the 72-acre wetland is known, was designed to include a mix of habitats. Water from San Leandro Bay feeds a network of channels and a marsh plain, the largest habitat, vegetated with cordgrass and pickleweed and inundated by the tide. Protected from the tidal flow are two "loafing" islands where shorebirds can roost. Between the islands lies a sizable intertidal pond, where shorebirds forage at high tide. Three ponds depend on seasonal rainfall. As they fill with the winter rains, they draw an abundance of shorebirds and waterfowl, along with gulls and terns.

"The restoration at the Martin Luther King wetland has been very successful," said Stuart Siegel, a wetland scientist who helped lead the monitoring effort. "It has two key elements that many projects do not attempt to create: the intertidal pond and the adjacent seasonal wetlands and ponds. These areas, in conjunction with the tidal marsh, have been very successful and are heavily used by shorebirds, waterfowl, and

nesting birds."

One of the key objectives was to provide foraging and resting habitat for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl. Analysis of the data collected by counters indicates that this objective has been met successfully. The greatest number of foraging shorebirds were found in the extensive verdant marsh plain. As the tide comes in, birds also seek out the intertidal pond and the loafing islands. Since many shorebirds move from one habitat to another with the tides, the report posits that these roosting and foraging areas "may help to enhance shorebird populations on a regional scale."

Another objective was to create salt marsh habitat for the California Clapper Rail, listed as federally endangered. A visit to Arrowhead Marsh often yields a view of one or more of these elusive rails, which rely on high salt marsh habitat with substantial cordgrass or pickleweed vegetation and tidal channels. Although the native plantings in the restoration area have grown, they have not yet developed sufficiently to attract rails. Realizing this goal will take additional time for the vegetation to mature.

MLK WETLAND RESTORATION, *continued on page 12*

RESTORE-A-THON, *continued from page 1*

about 15 birds. Golden Gate Audubon is dedicated to restoring healthy quail numbers. During our annual Restore-A-Thons and monthly restoration efforts, we have planted thousands of native plants at Harding Park and the Presidio's Quail Commons in conjunction with the Presidio Trust and the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department.

Restoring native habitats in local parks benefits other wildlife as well, such as the pair of Western Bluebirds that nested in the Presidio, the first time in 70 years that the species has been observed nesting in the city (see article about member and volunteer Matt Zlatunich and his work in the Presidio on page 3).

We have made good progress toward restoring quail habitat, but we have a long way to go. Please join us on November 12 with your gloves on. You'll learn about our Save the Quail program firsthand and meet other energetic and committed volunteers. If you can't be there, please support the work of Restore-A-Thon volunteers with your donation.

Save the Quail Restore-A-Thon

Saturday, November 12, 2005 • 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- ☐ I would like to join a work party at: ☐ Harding Park ☐ The Presidio ☐ Please choose a site for me
- ☐ I will sponsor myself at \$ _____ per hour. Please send me a pledge form so that I can also seek pledges from friends and family.
- ☐ I will sponsor the Golden Gate Audubon volunteer team or _____ at \$ _____ per hour or give a total donation of \$ _____. (Suggested minimum pledge rate: \$10 per hour.)
- ☐ I can't participate in the Restore-A-Thon but want to help! Enclosed is my donation of \$ _____.
- ☐ I would like a T-shirt (\$25 donation or more). ☐ M ☐ L ☐ XL

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Berkeley, CA 94702

Please RSVP by November 7 to help us prepare for the event.

"Hopefully, in the next few years, Clapper Rails will be among the breeding waterbirds in the restoration area," said wildlife biologist Steve Granholm, consultant to the restoration plan and bird survey protocol. "Breeding waterbirds on the site now include American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Killdeer, and Mallard. They are protected by an essential feature of the restoration, a sturdy see-through fence. It keeps out people and dogs, while allowing visitors to enjoy the birds."

Some 300,000 people visit MLK park each year. It is also the destination of GGA field trips and attracts countless individual birders. Through GGA's Eco-Oakland Program in the East Oakland schools, some 2,000 community members, including students, their teachers, and family members, come each year to observe the wetlands and birdlife and to engage in hands-on activities that augment their classroom learning. A regular field trip, led by an Eco-Oakland volunteer, is conducted in both English and Spanish and involves students and their

families in restoring habitat.

"Arrowhead Marsh and the restoration area are my favorite birding spots, period," said Courtenay Peddle, who participated in the census and leads field trips to the area. "The variety of birds is incredible. The ability to give people great looks at rails is a very satisfying feeling for a trip leader, and simply introducing new people to the area makes me feel good! My wife and I are part of a community of people, young and old, of all races, who enjoy this hidden gem."

Over the years of the census, the volunteers grew in number and enthusiasm. When the project concluded this last spring, many counters did not want to stop. "I'm amazed at how committed everyone was," said Carolyn Kolka, the census coordinator. "They didn't want the count to end. The dedication and perseverance of these volunteers really made the count successful."

Despite the park's many successes, vigilance is required to protect it. Late in 2004, a Florida gaming company and an American Indian tribe came forward with a proposal to build a casino on a 35-acre parking lot adja-

cent to the restored wetlands. The massive complex, operating 24 hours a day, would have threatened the wetlands and birds, as well as negatively impacted the park's use by local residents.

In addition, invasive eastern cordgrass, or spartina, has now infiltrated the restored wetland. While this exotic plant is a bay-wide problem, it threatens to degrade the MLK wetland. With support from the San Francisco Foundation, we will monitor the site over the next year with an emphasis on addressing this issue.

Thanks to the efforts of Golden Gate Audubon members and other concerned Bay Area residents, the casino proposal has been withdrawn, but the land is still available for development. We are determined to protect the MLK shoreline for both birds and Bay Area residents. To find out how you can help and to view the five-year summary report, go to Conservation Programs on our website, www.goldengateaudubon.org. And now that shorebirds are migrating through San Francisco Bay, go check out the success of the restored wetlands for yourself.

by Judith Dunham and Elizabeth Murdock

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The Gull is the official newsletter of Golden Gate Audubon Society. As a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon, you receive a subscription to *The Gull*, a 10 percent discount on all items purchased at our nature store, and the satisfaction of supporting local conservation efforts. Local members of the National Audubon Society are encouraged to join Golden Gate Audubon directly. Contact our office at 510.843.2222 for details.

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